British Policeman, Upset by Attacks Sticks to Story on Ray

By Jeremiah O'Leary
Washington Star Staff Writer

Retired Detective Chief Inspector Alexander A. Eist, vehemently denying that he left Scotland Yard in disgrace, said yesterday he is "quite upset" about the attack on his character and reliability as a witness before the House Assassinations Committee.

Eist, 50, answering questions by phone from his pub at Six-Mile Bottom, England, said that he wants a confrontation with those who have alleged that he was dismissed from Scotland Yard in disgrace.

Mark Lane, attorney for James Earl Ray, made the charges against Eist at Friday's hearing before a national television audience and cited a British barrister as the source of his information about Eist but did not identify him.

"It's an absolute lie and it is causing me a great deal of aggravation," Eist said, when asked about the allegations made by Lane. Ray's attorney had shouted angrily that Eist was dismissed in disgrace from Scotland Yard, that he was a corrupt official, that he took part in jewel robberies throughout England and that he invented oral confessions. Eist said he intends to consult an attorney to see whether Lane's comments in the House committee chamber are protected against legal action.

"AT SOME STAGE, one hopes Lane will be asked to explain himself," Eist said. "I retired honorably after 28 years on the force and that's a matter of record. I am still on pension. If I had been dismissed, there would be no pension."

Information officer Sandy Henny of Scotland Yard told The Washington Star from London, "Mr. Eist joined in 1948 and retired in 1976 as a detective chief inspector. In July 1976 he was charged with conspiracy to commit corruption and earlier this year was acquitted of all charges at Middlesex Crown Court. I don't have the records here of what that case was about. He was indeed awarded the British Empire Medal, which is usually for an act of bravery on duty."

Henny confirmed that Eist had been a member of the Flying Squad at Scotland Yard, the metropolitan police force of London. She said the Flying Squad was a unit that handled all major crimes.

Eist, a native of Cardiff, Wales, is married and has two children. In the last stages of World World II, he said, he was in the merchant navy. He is now proprietor of the Green Man Publick House, which is near Cambridge, about 50 miles from London.

HE CONFIRMED the basic details of his interview with House committee staffer Edward Evans two weeks ago, which precipitated the controversy. Eist said he was assigned to guard Ray after the suspected assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was captured in early June 1968. He was with Ray for many hours until July 17, 1968, when Ray was extradited from England to the U.S., and while they were together won Ray's confidence, Eist said.

"I know Ray had no intention of pleading guilty when I knew him because he thought he could beat the rap," Eist said. "And there can be no doubt that he had a great hatred for blacks." The interview with Evans quotes Eist as saying Ray had given him the impression that he had done the King killing.

"He was telling me that for him to have shot a black man of note in certain parts of America would make him into a national hero," Eist told Evans. "There came a time when he began to tell me about the gun and that he had thrown his gun away. He said he knew they had his fingerprints on the gun." Ray also told Eist, he said, that he ought to make a lot of money, up to half a million dollars, out of the killing.

The committee's information from Eist was received only two weeks ago after the former policeman contacted the FBI in London, and Evans was sent to Cambridge to interview him. Rep. Samuel Devine, R-Ohio, read the Eist interview aloud after a copy of it had been given to Ray and Lane. Rep. Richardson Preyer, D-NC, who is chairing the hearings, noted that the committee was not putting the Eist interview into the record and that it was at Ray's request that the whole interview was read aloud.

ALEXANDER A. EIST
Ready for showdown